



Quarterly Report FY 13 Q4 June – September 2013

PACT II

“Projet d’Assistance Ciblée aux Communautés de Tchirozerine”

Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)



Seed/tool beneficiary Oumaron Ajjassane (aged 37); Toundoun Billa village

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
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1. Executive Summary

Designed as a follow-on to the USAID/OFDA funded *Projet d'Assistance Ciblée aux Communautés de Tchirozerine* (PACT) program (2012-2013), PACT II continues to support the recovery of vulnerable households from successive years of crises in the Department of Tchirozerine in the Agadez region. The goal of the program is to consolidate initial recovery gains made in the food security and livelihoods situation of disaster-affected communities in the Tchirozerine Department, to prevent them from sliding back into extreme vulnerability.

During the reporting period, project start-up activities were completed and baseline data relevant to the project objectives collected. The project kickoff meeting was carried out on July 2, 2013 in Tchirozérine with the participation of elected officials; government technical services including the *Comité Sous Régional de Prévention et de Gestion des Catastrophes et des Crises Alimentaires* (CSR/PGCCA),¹ representatives of the target communes and NGO partners. In coordination with these local stakeholders, 2,707 vulnerable households were identified in 65 vulnerable villages to benefit from seeds and tools through a voucher distribution system. Distribution of vouchers was completed as well as the first of two rounds of voucher redemption fairs. In addition, 53 villages (32 new and 21 supported under PACT) were identified for the creation of 70 new VSLAs, and ongoing support and monitoring to 26 PACT supported groups. Finally, in close partnership with communal authorities, 22 villages were identified to participate in livelihoods restoration activities. 500 micro-entrepreneurs will receive support through business training and small conditional cash transfers – the selection of these beneficiaries is currently underway.

2. Program Overview

The population of Tchirozerine Department has suffered from the devastating effects of recurring food crises, natural disasters and regional instability in recent years. Continued support of vulnerable households in this region to meet their recovery needs in the next 12 months will prevent them from backsliding into more vulnerable conditions, and enable them to weather future shocks. Despite the relatively improved rainfall in 2012 in the country compared to previous years, the ability of communities to meet their household needs has been weakened by repeated crises during preceding years and they remain unable to satisfy their needs and recover on their own. To enable the population of Tchirozerine to recover from these repeated shocks, it proves crucial to consolidate gains from the initial PACT program, targeting some of the existing beneficiaries and extending to new beneficiaries in new villages in the Tchirozerine Department. Building on the achievements of the PACT program (2012-2013), PACT II is helping target vulnerable communities improve their food security, recover and maintain their household and productive assets, strengthen their economic prospects and promote sustainable recovery, while reducing their vulnerability to future shocks; using a community-led, market driven approach.

PACT II includes a package of interventions designed to consolidate and extend initial recovery gains made in the food security and livelihoods situation of disaster-affected communities in Tchirozerine in order to prevent them from sliding back into extreme vulnerability, by achieving two main objectives: 1) enhancing crop production of horticultural producers, and 2) restoring livelihood activities of producers and micro-entrepreneurs.

During the months of August and September 2013 the Department of Tchirozérine saw heavy rain fall, provoking flooding in the communes of Agadez, Tchirozérine, Dabaga, and Tabelot. Although it is not as severe as the previous year, 522 households across 26 villages were affected. Gardens, water pumps, agricultural wells, foodstuffs, household items, animals, and crops were damaged.

¹ Sub-regional Committee for the Prevention and Management of Catastrophes and Food Crises

3. Security

The security situation in Agadez deteriorated during this reporting period, especially in September. Banditry and armed robberies became more common in the city and along high ways. For example a gas station, food storage, a money transfer agency (BNIF AFOUA) and as well as a local NGO (Head-Temet) were victims of armed robberies during September 2013. Mercy Corps Agadez field office was also targeted during the night of 6-7 September 2013. While no one was hurt during the attack, a few items were stolen from the office and personal items such as cell phone and petty cash were seized from Mercy Corps staff. This robbery did not impact program activities and it appeared from the ensuing investigation that Mercy Corps was not specifically targeted. However and in coordination with the security service provider company, Mercy Corps reviewed its security protocols, to strengthen the vigilance of security guards and ensure the personnel can operate in a safer environment. Regional security and defense forces are working to apprehend the perpetrators and fight against the banditry in the region.

4. Performance Summary

Award-Level Beneficiaries

Cumulative Period Targeted		Reporting Period Reached		Cumulative Period Reached	
Total	IDP	Total	IDP	Total	IDP
18,900 individuals (2,700 households)	0	18,949 individuals (2,707 households)	0	18,949 individuals (2,707 households)	0

Progress to Date

SECTOR #1 Agriculture and Food Security Subsector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security		Objective: Producers enhance crop production			
Geographic Area (s)	The Tchirozerine Department of the Agadez Region of the Republic of Niger				
Beneficiaries Targeted	2,700 (0 IDPs)				
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	2,707 (0 IDPs)				
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	2,707 (0 IDPs)				
Subsector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex.	Male	Yes	675	126	126
	Female	Yes	2,025	2,581	2,581
	Other	Yes	0	0	0
Projected increase in the number of months of food self-sufficiency due to seed system activities/ agricultural input for beneficiary households.	N/A	Yes	50%	0%	0%

2,707 vulnerable heads of households (2,450 new and 257 previous PACT beneficiaries) in 65 targeted villages (see table below) were identified to benefit from agricultural production and food security subsector activities. Identification and selection criteria prioritized households who had been victims of recent shocks (notably floods), single- or women-headed households, households with more children under five, etc. as generally defined by the *Comité Régional de Prévention et de Gestion des Catastrophes et Crises Alimentaires* (CR/PGCCA)² in close collaboration with local leaders, local authorities, community beneficiaries and Mercy Corps field teams.

Table 1: Beneficiaries by Commune

Communes	Target village numbers	New beneficiaries	Previous PACT beneficiaries	Total beneficiaries
Agadez	9	271	74	345
Tabelot	15	722	0	722
Tchirozérine	25	957	136	1093
Dabaga	16	500	47	547
TOTAL	65	2450	257	2,707

Prior to organizing voucher exchanges, the project staff sought feedback from each community to determine the ideal timeframe for obtaining different types of seeds, and Mercy Corps planned two voucher fairs accordingly. This pre-distribution research also allowed the team to coordinate with seed vendors (who had to travel a certain distance to proposition seeds/tools for fairs) to plan their stocks adequately. Seeds such as maize, tomato and carrot were identified typically as needed in the first round (in August 2013), while potato seed was identified more generally as useful in the second round (planned for October 2013).

Five local seed and tool providers (out of eleven) were identified in partnership with the *Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture* (DRA)³ as certified vendors to participate in the voucher fairs for seeds (corn, wheat, tomato, carrot, garlic, potato, onion) and agricultural tools. After verifying seeds' stock, prices were negotiated for each seeds stock prior to germination tests and contract finalization. Germination tests were conducted for all seeds distributed by the *Institut National de Recherche Agronomique* (INRAN)⁴ through its regional seeds' service at the Agadez DRA. Mercy Corps encountered certain delays leading up to voucher distribution – notably, having to re-negotiate with a supplier whose seeds did not pass germination tests conducted as described above under the control and oversight of the regional agriculture department.

In August, the 2,450 new beneficiaries received a set of vouchers totaling 35,000 FCFA (approximately US\$70) while 257 previous PACT beneficiaries identified as persistently vulnerable, received vouchers in the amount of 17,500 FCFA (approximately \$US35). To avoid future delays, vouchers were distributed in a single round, given the pressing need for beneficiaries to receive both garden seed (carrot, tomato and onion) and the cool season crop seeds (corn and wheat), in time to initiate nurseries, which require up to two months prior to transplanting. Beneficiaries were informed that their vouchers could be redeemed at two separate voucher fair events, timed to coincide with the planting season for a) garden seeds and grains and b) potatoes. Thus, the second voucher fair is planned for the first weeks of October 2013, a time identified as favorable

² Regional Committee for the Prevention and Management of Catastrophes and Food Crises

³ Regional Agricultural Department

⁴ National Agricultural Research Institute

for potato planting, an activity prominent in the zone around Mt. Bagazam in Tabelot Commune. Every single voucher in the voucher set was coded for each beneficiary and officially signed over to each individual to ensure unbroken accountability from (1) distribution; to (2) redemption of each voucher by the beneficiaries to (3) justification by vendors of vouchers for reimbursement.



Corn and wheat seed Sample extraction at INRAN



Corn and wheat germination tests

Seven distribution centers for fairs were set up (two each in Dabaga, Tabelot, and Tchirozérine; one in Agadez) to facilitate exchanges between providers and beneficiaries. During distribution, certain communities, principally in the Dabaga Commune, commented that the distance from their community to the distribution site was too far. To address this concern we have thus planned more decentralized sites for the second round of voucher fairs. A post distribution monitoring will be conducted after all distributions have occurred to better determine efficiency, effectiveness and further lessons to be learned on the process. This will also inform and feed in future monitoring/evaluation

By the end of the reporting period the following quantities of seeds and agricultural tools had been redeemed by beneficiaries after the first voucher fair.

Table 2: Voucher-exchange seed and tools quantities

Commune	Seed quantities in kg						Shovels	Rakes	Hoes
	Corn	Wheat	Onion	Garlic	Tomato	Carrot			
Agadez	2,382	2,859	251	496	9	59	487	385	487
Dabaga	4,010	4,427	474	513	14	18	701	619	678
Tabelot	2,054	3,839	606	1,705	9	2	697	697	697
Tchirozerine	4,160	4,554	612	1,578	18	29	780	780	780
Totals	12,606	15,679	1,943	4,292	50	108	2,665	2,481	2,642

Table 3: Approximate \$US monetary equivalents

Commune	Corn	Wheat	Onion	Garlic	Tomato	Carrot	Shovel	Rake	Hoe	Total
Agadez	2,406	3,466	7,598	1,002	1,768	6,260	2,115	1,283	3,099	28,998
Dabaga	4,050	5,366	14,356	1,034	2,768	2,145	3,045	2,063	4,315	39,142
Tabelot	2,074	4,654	18,348	3,443	1,989	285	3,027	2,323	4,435	40,580
Tchiro	4,202	5,520	18,552	3,188	3,822	3,677	3,388	2,600	4,964	49,912
Grand Total	12,732	19,006	58,855	8,668	10,347	12,367	11,575	8,270	16,813	158,631

In addition, 1,900 beneficiaries received training in agriculture offered by seven trainers from the Tchirozérine *Direction Départementale de l'Agriculture* (DDA), who delivered 41 two-day training workshops. An initial survey of 390 producers and coordination with the department of agriculture helped define training themes of most interest for each area. Main interests identified:

- Techniques of compost production
- Techniques for use of mineral fertilizers
- Crop development techniques (site preparation, seed treatment and handling, planning techniques, and crop maintenance)
- Use of pesticides and alternative crop protection methods
- Basic irrigation techniques

Table 3: Beneficiaries trained by commune and by center

Commune	Training Center	Beneficiaries trained	Number of workshops organized
Agadez	Toudou billa	272	6
	Azel Ecole	74	2
Dabaga	Dabaga	110	3
	Indoudou	238	5
	Mararabat	89	2
	Temilt/Amdigra	211	4
Tchirozérine	Goofat Ouest	255	5
	Tchirozérine town	525	11
	Tchintaboraqq Est	128	3
TOTAL		1,902	41

<u>SECTOR #2</u> Economic Recovery and Market Systems <i>Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration, Microfinance</i>		<i>Objective: Producers and micro-entrepreneurs restore their livelihood activities.</i>			
Geographic Area (s)		The Tchirozerine Department of the Agadez Region of the Republic of Niger			
Beneficiaries Targeted		9,800 individuals (1,400 households) (0 IDPs)			
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		0 (0 IDPs)			
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		0			
Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration	Male	Yes	150	0	0
	Female	Yes	350	0	0

activities, by sex	Other	Yes	0	0	0
Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	N/A	Yes	50%	0	0
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through livelihoods restoration activities	N/A	Yes	\$75,000	0	0
Subsector: Microfinance					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people, by sex, or MSEs newly receiving financial services or continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/OFDA support	Male	Yes	420	0	0
	Female	Yes	980	0	0
	Other	Yes	0	0	0
Percentage of financial service accounts/groups supported by USAID/OFDA that are functioning properly	N/A	Yes	70%	0	0
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through microfinance activities	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

During the reporting period, activities related to the second objective included beneficiary selection, planning and initial training of trainers for upcoming VSLA and livelihoods restoration activities.

Micro-finance subsector

An agreement was signed between Mercy Corps and the national partner, ASUSU CIIGABA on September 1, 2013 for VSLA support services. Five field agents and a supervisor were recruited, trained and installed at site by ASUSU CIIGABA, to offer local support to the development of VSLAs that are to be trained. Joint field orientation and awareness-raising with local authorities on micro-finance activities was carried out during five days in September 2013 in 53 villages in the three communes (Dabaga, Tchirozérine and Agadez), meeting a total of 2,055 women self-grouped in 96 VSLAs (70 new and 26 previously established in PACT). From September 23-29, 2013, a training-of-trainers session was done for ASUSU CIIGABA new field agents by their professional trainers on VSLA methodology, including the following key points:

- Group leadership, elections, and good governance
- Internal rules and regulations and legal recognition
- Savings, social contributions, “solidarity fund”, and the first “savings/share” meeting
- Credit, conflict management and the first “credit” meeting.
- Interest, penalties and the first “reimbursement” meeting
- Partnership and negotiation
- Monitoring and self-evaluation
- Capital distribution and independence

An assessment on the 26 previous PACT supported VSLAs was conducted by Mercy Corps and ASUSU CIIGABA to determine where there is specific need for further strengthening the dynamism of the groups

and their long-term efficiency and effectiveness. The findings will be analyzed and further capacity building of these groups will be implemented in the next quarter.

Livelihoods restoration subsector

This subsector aims to facilitate small enterprise development through financial and technical support to a group of 500 small entrepreneurs. In consultation with communal authorities, 22 villages were selected as area of focal for these activities based on the general criteria of market accessibility and economic development potentials. Awareness-raising was conducted in these communities focused on the goals of the support fund and conditions to access it. The potential micro-initiative businesses plans, their viability, prioritization and trainings and disbursements will be conducted in the next quarter.

Selection criteria for small enterprise support use the following criteria:

- Past and current history of the enterprise
- Degree to which these enterprises have been affected negatively by past crises
- Viability of business plans proposed
- Potential to excel with the business
- Viability of the proposed micro-business initiative

From among the business plans assessed, a variety of potential activities proposed include:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| • Palm frond mat making | • Grain sales |
| • Art object making | • Corn flour production |
| • Dyeing | • Vegetable sales |
| • Knitting | • Sales of agricultural inputs (fertilizers) |
| • Perfume-making | • Fuel sales |
| • Small restaurants | • Cell phone credit sales |
| • Small retail commerce | |

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

At the start of the project, the team developed an indicator plan based on the project logframe and assigned specific responsibilities and designed monitoring tools to be used. This work allowed the project to define an approach for the baseline, a strategy for both geographic and beneficiary targeting, and definition of monitoring activities.

Concerning the choice of target villages, the project used an updated vulnerability framework established by the regional system for the prevention and management of food crises, a prioritization that was confirmed at a national government of Niger and partners' workshop in Maradi in June 2013.

Beyond this, additional criteria were considered in confirming the choices, including:

- Villages officially declared vulnerable by the CR/PGCCA.
- existence of gardening sites
- market accessibility
- presence of market gardeners recognized as vulnerable by the village
- possibility of access to land for vulnerable households
- villages situated along *koris*⁵

⁵ Seasonal water courses

A Household Economy Analysis (HEA) profile was established for each target village, in order to better establish targeting for vulnerable households among the most vulnerable and vulnerable. Additionally, the project used the household targeting (women-headed households, households recently affected by natural disasters) as recommended by the CR/PGCCA.

A baseline study was initiated to establish a referential point for PACT II which will serve as comparison element for the final evaluation of the PACT project. This baseline study revealed an overall household nutritional diversity score of three groups of food (such as cereals, green leaves and spices) per day on average. The groups of food rich in iron, protein, or vitamin A are absent or rarely consumed. This information has been used to inform the program's intervention strategy, for example, among seeds distributed, several (carrots, tomatoes) contain micro-nutrients that should contribute to improvements in household nutritional diversity scores. Additionally, data relating to agricultural practices has been gathered and will serve to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of producers.

6. Coordination

Mercy Corps works in close collaboration with administrative and communal authorities, state technical services (notably the regional department of agriculture, the regional women's promotion department and the child protection department), private sector actors (vendors), as well as other development partners (Oxfam, HELP, CICR, CIZ, OIM, Karkara, UN agencies) in order to avoid duplication in the work initiated.

Mercy Corps has participated in the OCHA regional office meetings involving these partners. To avoid duplication or contradiction in the support to income generating activities (IGA) in Agadez, and to harmonize the way this work is initiated, a coordination meeting was held between CICR, Karkara and Mercy Corps organized by the *Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix* (HACP)⁶ both at national level in Niamey and in the field in Agadez. Other coordinating meetings also relating to support to IGAs have been held with OIM and Oxfam.

7. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities

Overall, the program is on track towards meeting its two objectives – enhancing crop production and restoring livelihoods activities. There has been a slight delay in initiating trainings and cash transfers to micro-entrepreneurs, given the higher than anticipated demand in each community to participate in these activities. A key lesson learned during this reporting period related to micro-enterprises is the need for adequate time to provide appropriate support to micro-entrepreneurs in developing business plans and preparing funding requests.

Key activities planned for the next quarter include:

- Organize the second voucher fair for potato seeds;
- Seed and tool voucher post-distribution monitoring;
- Agricultural training principally in the Tabelot area, where majority of beneficiaries preferred to receive potato seeds;
- Follow-up technical support to agricultural producers;
- Selection, training and management training of micro-entrepreneurs;
- Initial cash transfers to micro-entrepreneurs to initiate business start-up;
- Ongoing support to micro-entrepreneurs as they carry out their business plans;
- Establishment of the support roadmap for previous PACT VSLAs; and,
- Awareness raising among beneficiaries around the creation, development, and accompaniment of the new VSLAs.

⁶ High Council for the Consolidation of Peace